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S E C R E T RANGOON 001517

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CINCPAC FOR FPA

E.O. 12958: DECL: 11/25/2012

TAGS: [PREL](#) [ETRD](#) [BM](#) [IZ](#)

SUBJECT: BURMA AND IRAQ

Classified By: COM CARMEN M. MARTINEZ; REASON 1.5(D).

11. (S) Summary: An official Burmese delegation headed by the Minister of Forestry traveled to Baghdad in March and concluded agreements to cooperate with the Government of Iraq on trade, banking and finance, oil and gas, scientific research and technical issues, and in other areas. The agreed minutes of the Burma-Iraq meetings, marked "Secret" by the GOB, were presented to the Government of Burma in October and obtained by Post in November. A copy will be pouched to EAP/BCLTV. End Summary.

12. (S) The 4-6 March 2002 Baghdad meetings were an outgrowth of the "Agreement on Trade, Economic, Scientific and Technical Cooperation between the Government of the Union of Myanmar and the Government of the Republic of Iraq" signed on 6 August 2001 in Baghdad, according to this document.

-- The seven-person Burmese delegation was lead by Aung Phone, Minister of Forestry, and included the deputy minister of energy, the Burmese ambassador to Egypt, and the managing director of Myanmar Economic Holdings Ltd, a large state-owned conglomerate.

-- The 23-member Iraqi side was led by the Minister of Planning, Dr. Hassan Al-Khattab. The Burmese delegation was also "received by" Vice President Taha Yassin Ramadhan, Deputy Prime Minister Hekmat Al-Azawi and the ministers of finance, trade, oil, and agriculture.

13. (S) The vague and wide-ranging agreement included pledges to cooperate in such benign fields as honeybee breeding and garbage disposal systems. The counter-trade proposal suggested Burmese agricultural and other products be traded for Iraqi "fertilizers, bitumen, and sulfur" (sic). The two sides pledged to exchange "scientific and technical information between specialized scientific research institutions in both countries in the fields of irrigation and water resources management." The minutes end with an agreement to hold a second session of the Joint Committee in Rangoon in March 2003.

14. (S) We note that the two dictatorships also agreed to draft a bilateral agreement "concerning National News Agencies, TV Broadcasting organizations" and to an "exchange of training courses, on a reciprocal basis in the field of media and information."

15. (S) Comment: The Burma-Iraq trade reported by other channels may be an outgrowth of the 2001 agreement and/or this March 2002 session of the Burma-Iraq Joint Committee. The agreed minutes of this meeting contain no individual elements that are particularly worrying in themselves. The document clearly portrays the relationship between Iraq and Burma as cordial and cooperative, with a pledge "to further enhance relations between the two countries in all fields."

Martinez